

Message Text

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PAGE 01 TEGUCI 03725 080314Z
ACTION ARA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1138

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEGUCIGALPA 3725

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINS, PINT, SHUM, HO
SUBJ: IMPENDING CHANGES IN HONDURAS GOVERNMENT

REF: TEGUCIGALPA 3676

1. SUMMARY: TWO OF OUR RECENT CIVILIAN CONTACTS (BATRES OF PRESIDENCY AND ACTING FOREIGN MINISTER CALLEJAS) APPEAR CONFIDENT THAT PRESIDENT MELGAR WILL BE ABLE TO HANDLE CURRENT MILITARY PRESSURES FOR GOVERNMENT CHANGES. A REPORT FOLLOWS: END SUMMARY.

2. ON AUGUST 4 I HAD A BRIEF CONVERSATION WITH CESAR BATRES OF PRESIDENCY. HE CLAIMED THAT PRESIDENT MELGAR HAS "NEVER BEEN HAPPIER." (COMMENT: WE SURMISE THAT MELGAR IS BUOYED BY SUPPORT HE IS OBTAINING FROM PRO-GOVERNMENT CIVILIAN GROUPINGS. I WILL BE ABLE TO REPORT MORE FULLY ON BATRES' LATEST READING OF THE SITUATION AFTER OUR MEETING ON WEDNESDAY MORNING, AUGUST 9).

3. ON AUGUST 7 I TOOK NEW DCM TO CALL ON ACTING FOREIGN MINISTER CALLEJAS. AS WE PLANNED, WE TOOK ADVANTAGE OF CALL TO STRESS PRIORITY ATTACHED BY USG TO PROMOTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS. CALLEJAS NEEDED NO BRIEFING, TELLING US HE HAS STUDIED PRESIDENT CARTER'S CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 02 TEGUCI 03725 080314Z

OAS SPEECH CAREFULLY AND KNOWS THAT HUMAN RIGHTS IS A PRIMORDIAL AMERICAN CONCERN.

4. DCM REFERRED TO HONDURAS' GENERALLY GOOD REPUTATION IN THE PROTECTION OF THE PERSON AND DEDICATION TO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, AS WELL AS GOH'S INTENTION TO RESTORE DEMOCRATIC RULE. REFERRING TO HIS BRIEFINGS IN WASHINGTON BEFORE COMING TO

TEGUCIGALPA, DCM MENTIONED CONCERN THAT A MILITARY GOVERNMENT WILL, IN FACT, RESTORE CONSTITUTIONAL RULE AND SOME QUESTION ABOUT FREEDOM OF THE PRESS. CALLEJAS' BACK STIFFENED A BIT WHEN THE PRESS WAS MENTIONED; HE SAID THAT ANY FEARS ABOUT THE PRESS ARE UNFOUNDED. HE STATED CATEGORICALLY THAT PRESIDENT MELGAR WILL RESPECT THE TIMETABLE SET TO ELECT A CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY.

5. AMBASSADOR THEN REFERRED GENTLY TO RECENT REPORTS OF GOVERNMENT CHANGES. CALLEJAS RESPONDED THAT CHANGES ARE INDEED IN THE OFFING AND THAT PRESIDENT MELGAR IS PREPARED TO DISMISS ANY INDIVIDUAL WHO DESERVES REPLACEMENT. HOWEVER, CALLEJAS WENT ON CONFIDENTLY, MELGAR'S AUTHORITY HAS BEEN CHALLENGED AND HE (MELGAR) INTENDS TO PRECIPITATE A SHOWDOWN THIS WEEK TO DETERMINE WHO IS IN CHARGE. CALLEJAS SEEMED CONFIDENT THAT MELGAR WOULD DOMINATE THE SITUATION. CALLEJAS COMMENTED THAT IF MELGAR WERE TO BE REPLACED, THEN THE WHOLE ELECTORAL TIMETABLE MIGHT BE IN JEOPARDY. NEVERTHELESS, CALLEJAS SEEMED VERY RELAXED.
JARAMILLO

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